

July 1, 2009

Education Workgroup

Smart Growth Education Course Recommendations



Education Workgroup Charge

The full charge of the Education Workgroup is to recommend education courses that will expand knowledge and awareness of smart growth principles to a variety of audiences. Senate Bill 0280 and House Bill 0297; "Smart , Green, and Growing—Smart and Sustainable Growth Act of 2009 charged the Task Force with recommending by a certain date (July 1, 2009), a smart growth education course for local planning commissioners and members of local boards of appeals. The recommended education course is to provide state-wide training consistency on matters related to comprehensive plans and land use. Development and delivery of education course recommendations for other target audiences will continue beyond July 1, 2009.

It is expected that the initial recommended smart growth education course will be ready for deployment on January 1, 2010.

Objectives

To satisfy Recommendation 1 (expand the Eight Smart Growth Vision), the Education Workgroup determined that the recommended education course would reflect the newly adopted 12 Visions of Smart Growth as well as the 10 Smart Growth Principles.

To satisfy Recommendation 50 (Smart Growth Education), the Education Workgroup's objectives are to:

- 1. Research, identify, and document existing smart growth education courses and other offerings throughout the state.*
- 2. Analyze the inventory of existing smart growth education courses and other offerings to identify gaps and deficiencies.*
- 3. Identify target audiences that will benefit from smart growth education.*
- 4. Define and recommend (by July 1, 2009) an education course that will provide consistency in smart growth education to planning commissioners and boards of appeals members across the state such that the requirements of SB280 and HB0297 are met.*
- 5. Define and recommend education courses that will augment or enhance existing smart growth education courses and offerings for other target audiences such as MSDE pre-K to 12 students, higher education students, elected officials, citizens, and others.*

Methodology

The Education Workgroup held several face-to-face meetings as well as telephone conferences. Most tasks involved researching assigned topics and building several large matrices of detailed findings. The detailed findings on smart

growth course materials, course objectives, contact persons, and so on are not included in this report, but are maintained as interim work products.

Through a number of meetings and independent research activities, the Education Workgroup performed the following major steps to gather the information needed to define the recommended education course for planning commissioners and boards of appeals members. The major tasks were:

- 1. Performed a county-by-county survey to identify the current and recent past inventory of education components employed for planning commissioners. The survey asked, (1) what they have now? (2) who made up the target audience?, and (3) what education components or delivery methods they would like to see in the future? This included offerings such as Planning 101 in Prince George's County.*
- 2. Compiled the same level of information from municipalities. This included offerings such as the City of Cumberland Planning Commissioner Training Series.*
- 3. Collected information on education components available from the Chesapeake Bay Foundation.*
- 4. Researched smart growth course offerings from Leadership Maryland Academy for Excellence in Local Government.*
- 5. Contacted MSDE and inventoried smart growth courses available in pre-K to 12.*
- 6. Identified courses from the American Planning Association.*
- 7. Identified smart growth course offerings and methodologies employed by other US states.*
- 8. Solicited the help of interns at University of Maryland to collect offerings at the university. Urban Studies and Planning Program (URSP).*
- 9. Identified smart growth education employed by the Federal Government [Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)].*
- 10. Defined the requirements and structure of the course.*
- 11. Initiated regularly scheduled meetings between the Education Workgroup and MDP's Information Technology Department to discuss Web design, content, course length, course completion certification, and security and privacy.*

Workgroup Status

The Education Workgroup continues to engage in face-to-face meetings, telephone conferences, and independent research and documentation. To date, various action items have been defined, assigned, and are in various stages of progress. Education Workgroup members continue to gather education inventory independently.

The Education Workgroup will meet with MDP's Information Technology Department as necessary to provide requirements needed to build the online course.

The online course is required by January 1, 2010.

Smart Growth Planning, Development, and Land Use

The Education Workgroup determined that the eventual recommendation should reflect the 12 Visions of Smart Growth and the 10 Smart Growth Principles.

Smart Growth is a term that includes three dimensions: the ultimate goals for land use planning, the characteristics of smart development that address those goals, and the process of good land use planning. The recommended education course will be administered to planning commissioners and members of boards of appeals by MDP pursuant to provisions in SB280. The recommended education course will focus on the following:

- **Goals of Smart Growth Planning**
Smart Growth promotes livability, sustainability, well managed development, and a high quality of life for all Marylanders.
- **Characteristics of Smart Development**
Smart Growth minimizes the human footprint by directing new development to existing population and business centers, growth areas adjacent to those centers, and/or strategically-selected new centers. The development is characterized by mixed uses, walkability, a range of employment and transportation options, equitable distribution of costs and benefits, diverse housing choices for citizens of varying incomes and life cycle stages, and a strong sense of community and place. These design features and components vary in order to reflect the character of a given area. A Smart Growth planning policy promotes vitality in cities, small towns and rural areas.
- **Process of Smart Land Use Planning**
The Smart Growth planning process features active participation by an aware and knowledgeable citizenry, and collaboration between government, business entities and citizens in crafting plans to achieve Smart Growth goals. The resulting policies, strategies, programs and funding for growth and development, for natural resource conservation, and for transportation and other infrastructure, are integrated across local, regional, state and interstate levels.

Recommended Target Audiences

The Education Workgroup identified the following entities as potential target audiences for smart growth education.

1. *Local Planning Commissioners and Planners (due July 1, 2009)*
2. *Board of Appeals Members (due July 1, 2009)*
3. *MSDE Pre-K to 12 Students*
4. *College Students*
5. *Adult Citizens*
6. *Federal, State, and Local Elected Officials*
7. *Community Leaders (including Neighborhood and Community Associations, Homeowner Associations)*
8. *Environmental/Land Use Groups*

Recommended Delivery Mechanisms

The Education Workgroup determined that the most effective manner to deliver the smart growth education course to planning commissioners and boards of appeals members is via an interactive, web-based course. Looking forward to the remaining target audiences, the following delivery mechanisms will be considered.

- 1. World Wide Web access, with printed and CD-ROM formats also available*
- 2. Schools*
- 3. Colleges/Universities*
- 4. Traditional Media (Mailings, Television, Radio, Newspapers)*
- 5. Professional Organizations (MPCA, APA)*
- 6. Town Meetings*
- 7. Leadership Courses (Leadership Maryland, Academy for Excellence in Local Government)*
- 8. Nonprofit Organizations/Advocacy Groups*
- 9. State Agencies*
- 10. MACo/MML*

Recommended Education Course Characteristics

This first education course will be tailored to meet the specific needs of both planning commissioners and members of boards of appeals. A comprehensive course is envisioned for planning commissioners. However, a less specific module is envisioned for members of boards of appeals because their charge varies from county to county or municipality to municipality.

The Education Workgroup recommends that the course be comprehensive such that it provides consistency in smart growth principles across the state, while not being so intensive, time-consuming, or onerous that it scares citizens away from serving on their local planning commission or boards of appeals.

The education course for planning commissioners and members of boards of appeals should be an online course, via the Internet or via a state agency Intranet. Other delivery media such as printed versions or CD-ROMs should be available to jurisdictions that do not have online access. The course should be available to counties and municipalities at no cost.

The online course should have the capability to generate certificates of completion. In addition to the course itself, the Education Workgroup recommends that MDP develop a means of tracking course participation, completion, and certification.

The recommended education course for Planning Commissioners and Boards of Appeals Members contains 5 modules:

1. *Introduction (Planning 101)*
2. *Planning Toolbox (Planning 201)*
3. *Either the Planning Commissioner Module or the Boards of Appeals Member Module*
4. *Maryland's Smart Growth Vision for the Future*
5. *Certificate of Completion*
6. *The course is designed to be extensible so that counties and municipalities can incorporate topics specific to their locality.*

<i>Smart Growth Education Course Contents</i>
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Specific content for each module is presented in the next table.

PLANNING			PC	BOA	Est. Hours
Introduction (or Planning 101)	What is Smart Growth?	Smart Growth laws/density requirements	x	x	
		Trends, statistics, and current growth patterns	x	x	
		Planning and zoning terms and definitions	x	x	
		Priority Funding Areas (PFAs), appeals, variances, ordinances, and vesting	x	x	
		State planning laws. Charter versus commissioner forms of government	x	x	
		Optional Local Module			
		Smart Growth Quiz	x	x	
	What is a Comprehensive Plan?	Required comprehensive plan elements. Relationship to the 12 visions of Smart Growth	x	x	
		State, local, and citizen roles in the development of a comprehensive plan	x	x	
		County/municipal planning relationship (i.e., schools, public safety/transportation, water and sewer planning, etc.	x	x	

PLANNING			PC	BOA	Est. Hours
		Reading maps/PFAs. Understanding comment areas	x	x	
		Municipal Growth Element	x	x	
		Optional Local Module			
		Comprehensive Plan Quiz	x	x	
Planning Toolbox (or Planning 201)	Growth Management Tools	APFOs	x	x	
		Open space and recreation	x	x	
		Water and sewer infrastructure and master plans	x	x	
		Capital Improvement Programs	x	x	
		Impact fees. Other development fees	x	x	
		Developer's rights and responsibilities	x	x	
		Annexation laws and agreements	x	x	
		Optional Local Module			
		Growth Management Tools Quiz	x	x	
	Environmental Laws and Regulations	Critical area law, storm water management regulations	x	x	

PLANNING			PC	BOA	Est. Hours
		Optional Local Module	x	x	
		Environmental Laws and Regulations Quiz	x	x	
	Other	Housing and Transportation issues	x	x	
		Optional Local Module			
		Housing and Transportation QUIZ	x	x	
Planning Commissioner Module	The Role of a Planning Commissioner	What does a planning commissioner do?	x		
		Meeting management and public input	x		
		Legal rights and responsibilities	x		
		Optional Local Module			
		QUIZ	x		
Boards of Appeals Member Module	The Role of a Boards of Appeals Member	What Boards of Appeals members do?		x	
		Meeting management and public input		x	
		Legal rights and responsibilities		x	

PLANNING			PC	BOA	Est. Hours
Maryland's Smart Growth Vision for the Future	Smart Green and Growing	The role of local government officials	x	x	
		Links to MACO and MML	x	x	
		Links to state department and General Assembly websites and programs	x	x	
		Other resources	x	x	
		Optional Local Module			
		Smart Growth Future Quiz	x	x	
Certification	Maryland's Smart Growth Training Completion	Certificate generation	x	x	